



**Testimony of Safe Haven of Greater Waterbury
In Support of SB 456, An Act Concerning Harassment, Electronic Harassment, and
Cyberstalking.**

Heather Francisco, Adult Advocate/Legislative Liaison
Judiciary Committee March 29, 2012

Senator Coleman, Representative Fox, and honorable members of the Committee, my name is Heather Francisco. I am the adult advocate and legislative liaison for Safe Haven of Greater Waterbury Sexual Assault Crisis Services. Safe Haven is a member of Connecticut Sexual Assault Crisis Services (CONNSACS). Prior to taking this position I worked at Safe Haven, also a member of Connecticut Coalition Against Domestic Violence (CCADV), with domestic violence survivors and their families. I took that job because I too am a survivor of domestic violence. Based on these things, I would like to offer our support for SB 456, An Act Concerning Harassment, Electronic Harassment, and Cyberstalking.

Connecticut's stalking statutes (Sec. 53a-181c,d,e) are outdated and ineffective. Connecticut is tied with Alabama for having the oldest unrevised stalking statutes in the country. Stalking can occur in many forms and technology has made it easier for stalkers to harass, follow, and possible attack their targets. It has been my experience that stalkers do not view their targets as human beings instead these individuals are viewed as possessions. Currently electronic communication is not included in Connecticut's stalking language. We must update the language to create the crime of electronic harassment, which would protect victims whose offenders harass, annoy, or alarm them through "an electronic communication device, radio, computer, Internet web site or similar means", and cyberstalking. I was fortunate that my abuser did not stalk me for an extended period of time, but others I have worked with have not been so lucky.

Connecticut's stalking statutes are not flexible enough to cover new technologies that offenders use to stalk their victims. Our current statutes do not cover the actions of offenders who use GPS, cell phones, or the internet to track their victims. Connecticut's stalking statutes currently only apply to victims who fear for their personal physical safety, even though offenders often cause victims to fear for their loved ones or to worry that they will lose their job. These are legitimate fears that should be protected under the law.

Thank you for considering this important piece of legislation. We hope that you will join us in supporting SB 456.

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